

# Excerpts from "The Odyssey"

## Penelope Weaving

### **Background:**

For many years, Penelope waited at home on the Greek island of Ithaca for her husband King Odysseus to return from the Trojan War. Since she is a lovely, wealthy woman, she has many suitors who were convinced that her husband died in the war and that she should marry one of them. Vulnerable without the protection of her husband, Penelope tells the suitors she cannot marry until she finishes weaving a piece of cloth. She weaves all day, then unravels her work at night. After three years, the suitors find out that she has been delaying them with this excuse.

### **Excerpt** *(audio available on Ms. CK's wiki):*

They rush the marriage on, and I spin out my wiles.  
A God from the blue it was inspired me first  
to set up a great loom in our royal halls  
and I began to weave, and the weaving finespun,  
the yarns endless, and I would lead them on: "Young men,  
my suitors, now that King Odysseus is no more,  
go slowly, keen as you are to marry me, until  
I can finish off this web...  
so my weaving won't all fray and come to nothing."  
... Then, when the wheeling seasons brought the fourth year on  
and the months waned and the long days came round once more,  
then, thanks to my maids – the shameless, reckless creatures –  
the suitors caught me in the act, denounced me harshly.  
So I finished it off. Against my will. They forced me.  
And now I cannot escape a marriage, not can I contrive  
a deft way out.

### **Comprehension Questions:**

- How did Penelope delay marrying one of her suitors?
- How long was Penelope able to trick her suitors?
- Who told the suitors that Penelope unraveled her weaving at night?
- What did Penelope's suitors force her to do when they discovered her trick?